

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 6, 2020

The Honorable R.D. James
Assistant Secretary of the Army (Civil Works)
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
441 G Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20314

The Honorable Russ Vought
Acting Director
Office of Management and Budget
725 17th Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20503

Dear Assistant Secretary James and Acting Director Vought:

We write in support of the Howard A. Hanson Dam (HAHD) project in Washington state and urge you to allocate funding in the current and future fiscal years to fulfill the mitigation actions agreed to by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Army Corps) and NOAA Fisheries in the Howard A. Hanson Dam Biological Opinion (BiOp) dated February 15, 2019. Completing the activities outlined in the BiOp would improve recovery of salmon and steelhead listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and uphold the federal government's trust responsibilities to impacted Tribes. Moving forward on this project will also facilitate the Army Corps' continued operation of HAHD to protect the Green River Valley from flooding, increase drinking water storage capacity, and provide necessary salmon and steelhead habitat that will increase salmon populations and support Southern resident orcas. We request prioritization of the next phase of this project in the FY20 Work Plan for the Army Civil Works program.

In October 2015, NOAA Fisheries issued a draft jeopardy opinion to the Army Corps for the continued operation of HAHD and full realization of the Howard A. Hanson Dam Additional Water Storage Project (HAHD-AWSP)—a multi-phase habitat restoration and flood mitigation effort authorized by Water Resources Development Act of 1999. NOAA fisheries found the dam puts Chinook salmon, Puget Sound steelhead and Southern resident orcas at risk. The February 2019 BiOp outlines the Army Corps' responsibility to design and construct a downstream fish passage facility to aid in the recovery of ESA-listed species. Tacoma Public Utilities, Water Division (TPU) has made investments to increase adult salmon and steelhead survival rates. However, federal funding is needed to complete the design and cost estimate phase of the fish passage facility at Howard Hanson Dam to ensure salmon and steelhead are able to move upriver to spawning habitat and complete returns to Puget Sound.

Completing downstream fish passage would reopen at least 60 miles of prime salmon and steelhead habitat above Howard Hanson Dam, nearly doubling the amount of habitat currently available. According to the group of local governments, community organizations, and businesses that have joined forces to recover salmon in the Green-Duwamish River system

(Water Resource Inventory Area 9 Watershed Ecosystem Forum [WRIA 9]), restoring fish runs above Howard Hanson Dam, "...is the largest single gain in potential salmon production in Puget Sound." Importantly, the project will fulfill the federal government's trust responsibilities to Tribes that rely on healthy salmon populations and it provides reliable clean drinking water to the approximately one million residents living in Tacoma, Covington, Kent, Federal Way, Maple Valley, and the surrounding communities.

Significant resources have already been invested downstream of the dam to restore or improve fish habitat. Those improvements continue to support the enormous potential for significantly increasing salmon and steelhead productivity in the watershed. Major project investments required by local governments have also been completed, including the system to move some adult spawning salmon and steelhead upstream of Howard Hanson Dam. TPU and other local government partners (City of Kent, Covington Water District, & Lakehaven Water and Sewer District) have invested more than \$400 million for supply and treatment facilities necessary to provide clean drinking water to the area. For these investments to be realized, the BiOp must move forward and the HAHD project must be prioritized.

We support providing funding as soon as possible for the Seattle District to undertake its responsibility to execute the BiOp. It is critical the design and cost update phase of this project is completed and the project is moved onto the construction phase. We appreciate your support and assistance in this effort to complete this urgent priority.

Sincerely,



Kim Schrier, M.D.
Member of Congress



Patty Murray
United States Senator



Maria Cantwell
United States Senator



Jaime Herrera Beutler
Member of Congress




Dan Newhouse
Member of Congress



Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Member of Congress



Adam Smith
Member of Congress



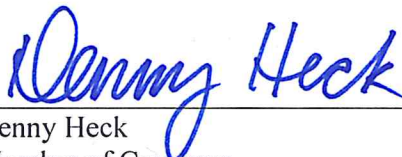
Derek Kilmer
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Suzan K. DelBene
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Rick Larsen
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Pramila Jayapal
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